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Ramming Incident Ends Christmas Lull Off Iceland

The two-week lull in the dispute between Iceland and Britain over fishing rights ended on December 28 when an Icelandic Coast Guard vessel reported it had been rammed by a British frigate well within Iceland's unilaterally declared 200-mile fishing zone.

London called the collision an accident while Reykjavik claimed that the incident was a carefully coordinated attack. The ramming was the first such incident since December 11 when a similar episode led to an Icelandic complaint at the UN Security Council.

It is unclear whether the holiday "truce" was the result of efforts by both governments to restrain their ship captains. In any event, neither government took advantage of the lull to resume the stalled negotiations.

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ANNEX

Turkish Internal Political Tensions Impinge on Foreign  
Policy-Making

Prime Minister Demirel's preoccupation with holding his shaky four-party coalition together while parrying thrusts from the opposition has brought the Turkish government to a virtual standstill. In power for nearly nine months, Demirel's Nationalist Front coalition has accomplished little in domestic legislation, and less in foreign affairs. It has been in dealing with such sticky foreign policy problems as Cyprus and the US military bases that Demirel's perception of his political problems has had the greatest impact.

The Turks appear to have bowed to mounting international pressure to reopen the Cyprus talks, but the Turkish government appears still unwilling to make the concessions necessary for significant progress toward a settlement. Demirel seems convinced that concessions on Cyprus would bring down his government and possibly cost him his political future.

Coalition Headaches

The failure of either of Turkey's two major parties, Demirel's Justice Party or the opposition Republican People's Party, to win a majority of seats in the National Assembly in 1973 is at the root of government stagnation. Neither party has been able to assemble a working majority without enlisting the 48 deputies of Necmettin Erbakan's

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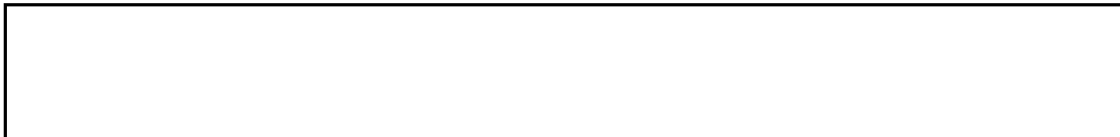
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conservative, Islam-oriented National Salvation Party. Even with the Salvationists and two minor parties, Demirel has been able to muster only a slim majority, and has had to rely on the support of a handful of independents.

Erbakan's erratic behavior was largely responsible for the collapse of the awkward coalition between the Salvationists and the left-of-center Republican People's Party in the fall of 1974. He has played a similarly destabilizing role in Demirel's government, demanding greater representation in the cabinet and pursuing single-mindedly his nationalistic goals without regard for the positions or views of his coalition partners.

Erbakan became even more difficult during the fall Senate election by campaigning independently. Fearing that voters would choose Demirel's Justice Party because it was the most visible element of the government, Erbakan campaigned harder against his coalition partner than against the opposition. Cabinet work came largely to a halt in the face of bitter anti-Demirel rhetoric and intimations that the Salvationists might bolt if they did well at the polls.

Erbakan's party, however, performed dismally. Although most observers of the Turkish political scene expected the outspoken Salvationist leader to retreat, Erbakan did not oblige. On little more than sheer audacity he continued to maintain an independent stance in the government, keeping alive in Demirel's mind the fear of a Salvationist withdrawal from the government if the party's principles-- particularly with respect to concessions on Cyprus-- were threatened by compromise.



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It is moot whether Erbakan would leave the government if Turkey makes concessions on Cyprus. Having already antagonized opposition leader Bulent Evcecit, Erbakan--who seems very much to enjoy the perquisites of power--would have no where to go politically. Once out of power, moreover, the Salvationists would be more vulnerable to the threat of legal sanctions, stemming from their constitutionally questionable melding of religious and political tenets.

Logic rarely seems, however, to govern Erbakan's actions. This assessment no doubt colors Demirel's perception of Erbakan, and exacerbates the Prime Minister's seeming tendency to avoid major initiatives and difficult decisions even under the most favorable circumstances.

#### The Opposition

By nature and necessity, Demirel worries as much about what opposition leader Ececit--whose Republican People's Party outpolled Demirel's 43 percent to 40 percent in the partial senatorial elections in October--is doing and thinking as he does about pursuing his own goals. Demirel's hard line on the US bases question, for example, is probably dictated in large part by the fear that Ececit--who favors extracting maximum concessions from the US--would be able to parlay a softer government position into votes in the next election.

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Ecevit's position on Cyprus also seems to affect Demirel's stance on the issue, although in a more subtle manner. During the last six months, Ecevit has repeatedly spoken of the need for a Cyprus settlement and of his willingness to support certain concessions to achieve it. He has left the impression that he would not oppose a "reasonable" government approach to the problem.

Despite these signs, Demirel remains skeptical and even fearful that Ecevit may be leading him into a political trap. Demirel can probably envision Ecevit--who as prime minister in 1974 led Turkey to its gains on Cyprus--pointing the accusing finger at Demirel for giving up what he had gained.

#### The Military Leadership

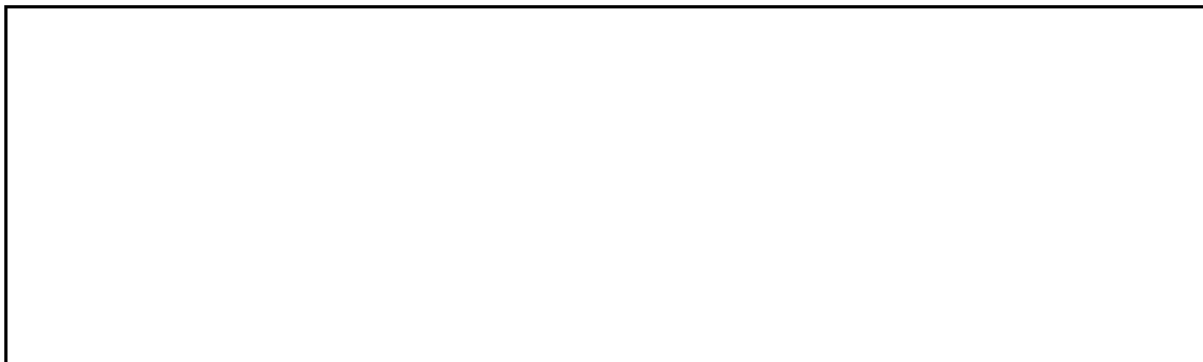
The senior military leadership is another locus of power that Demirel must contend with as he grapples with Cyprus and the US bases issue. The senior military leadership is almost a fourth branch of government because it dominates the powerful National Security Council, it traditionally provides a retired military man to fill the presidency, and it historically has been the ultimate guarantor of Turkey's democratic institutions. Demirel is all the more sensitive to the views of these men, having been forced from the prime ministry in 1971 by an ultimatum from general staff officers.

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The current senior military leadership seems unlikely under present circumstances to go beyond pressuring the government to pursue policies that meet military needs. This attitude probably reflects two streams of thought. There appears to be a belief that the long term interests of democracy in Turkey are important enough that more direct forms of military involvements in the political process should be avoided if at all possible. Reinforcing this belief is the reluctance of most military leaders to take on the responsibility for solving the many difficult problems currently facing the country.



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#### Prospects

Short term prospects for a reduction of the political tensions impinging on Demirel's ability to act with authority are not good. Barring the ever present threat of Erbakan bolting the cabinet, Demirel's government will probably struggle along until parliamentary elections are required in 1977. Elections could come earlier if a majority of the National Assembly came to favor them. It would, however, probably take a prolonged cabinet crisis and rising fears of military intervention.

Parliamentary elections may in fact offer the best hope for political stability and strong government in Turkey. Voting patterns in the October 1975

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Senate elections suggest that the popularity of the many splinter parties may have peaked and that either Demirel's or Ecevit's parties could emerge from the next parliamentary elections with a clear majority. That could provide Turkey with a strong political government for the first time since the late 1960s.

In the meantime, Demirel will continue to be guided almost solely by internal political considerations in making both foreign and domestic policy decisions. Indeed, his penchant for playing it safe and making no bold moves make it at least questionable whether even a clear electoral victory would prompt Demirel to move decisively to resolve such issues as Cyprus or the status of US bases in Turkey.

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